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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Saturday 30 September 1978 CG NIDC 78/229

[Redacted box]

NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION
Unauthorized Disclosure Subject to Criminal Sanctions

State Dept. review completed

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ISRAEL: Politics After Vote

[] The Knesset's approval of the Camp David accords is a major personal victory for Israeli Prime Minister Begin and a broadening of political support for his leadership on peace issues. Begin, however, paid a significant political price for his victory. A sizable number of Begin's traditional supporters vociferously opposed the accords, and their opposition has reinforced the Prime Minister's already strong reluctance to consider new concessions on delicate West Bank issues.

[] The approval of the accords by more than a two-thirds majority of the Knesset reflects the view of most Israelis that peace with Egypt is worth the "painful concessions" involved in abandoning airbases and settlements in Sinai.

[] The hardliners' concerns, shared even by Labor Party leaders and others supporting the accords, focus on possible precedents that removing the Sinai settlements and returning to the pre-June 1967 border with Egypt could set for future negotiations over the West Bank and Golan Heights.

[] Many Israelis are equally apprehensive that Begin's agreement to "full autonomy" for the West Bank could eventually lead to an independent Palestinian state, anathema to almost all Israelis. Many ideologues in the Herut and Laam factions in Begin's dominant Likud bloc, and Likud's closest coalition ally, the National Religious Party, believe Begin has betrayed them over central issues concerning the West Bank, part of the biblical "land of Israel."

[] The US Embassy in Tel Aviv doubts that the opponents of the accords threaten the stability of Begin's government at present. Whether they represent a long-term political threat to Begin could be indicated by the moves of other Likud members who did not support Begin. These men include speaker of the Knesset Yitzhak Shamir, chairman of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Security Committee Moshe Arens, deputy minister in Begin's office Yoram Aridor, and foreign information adviser Zalman Shoval.

[] According to the US Embassy, the strident outcries from some of Begin's longtime supporters have taken a heavy

[redacted]

psychological toll on him. Their opposition has left Begin little room in the short term even for tactical maneuvering on West Bank issues.

[redacted] Begin may seek to turn the opposition to his tactical advantage by arguing that the US must recognize his domestic vulnerabilities and not push for "unreasonable" concessions on the ticklish West Bank - Palestinian complex of issues. Begin already has laid the groundwork for a tough negotiating stance by emphasizing repeatedly the tactical nature of his concessions at the summit and his determination not to abandon the West Bank.

[redacted]

LEBANON: Another Truce

[redacted] *The fighting in Beirut between Christian militiamen and Syrian troops eased yesterday morning. Lebanese President Sarkis and Phalange Chief Pierre Jumayyil are attempting to arrange a firmer truce, but Sarkis' ability to lead the country is being increasingly questioned. Reaction to President Carter's comments on Lebanon has been sparse.*

[redacted] A Phalange leader told the US Embassy yesterday that Sarkis, Jumayyil, and the nominal Lebanese commander of the Arab Deterrent Force had agreed Thursday on a plan to deal with the current round of fighting. The Lebanese will ask the Syrians to consolidate their positions in some areas of East Beirut, and Lebanese Army units are to take up positions in the area. The Phalange leader said he believed that the Syrians would accept the plan and that the fighting could be brought under control.

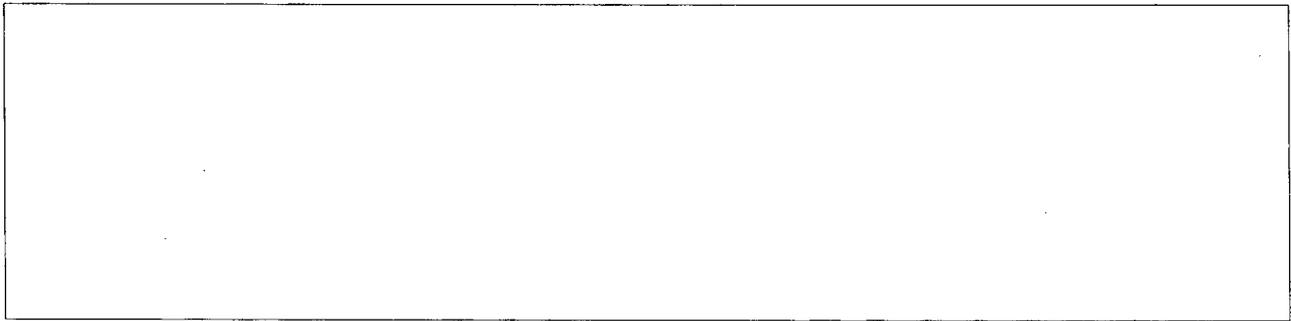
[redacted] Giving the Lebanese Army a greater role in Beirut is one way of separating the Maronite militias and the Syrian forces. The Army, however, is weak and unable to impose its will on the warring groups, and all the parties would have to approve its use. Muslims oppose having many Army units in Beirut because they consider the Army to be Maronite-dominated.

[redacted] The Lebanese press has highlighted President Carter's press conference statements on Lebanon, but most Lebanese leaders have not yet commented. Hardline Maronite leader Camille Shamun issued a statement favoring an international conference on Lebanon but criticized the US for not acting earlier.

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[redacted] The Syrian media and political leaders have not yet commented publicly. The Syrians may be willing to attend a conference on the Lebanese crisis but not if Israel and Egypt participate. They and the Lebanese Government oppose any direct talks with Israel. The Syrians believe Israel's goal in Lebanon is to force them out of the country and have a Maronite-dominated state allied with Israel.

[redacted] A Syrian diplomat in Europe told US officials on Tuesday that the Syrians believe Egypt has no constructive role to play in Lebanon. He criticized Egyptian Foreign Minister Butrus Ghali for commenting that Egypt might participate in any future talks about Lebanon. The Syrians probably suspect that Egypt also wants to reduce their influence in Lebanon.



WEST BANK: Mayors' Statement

[redacted] *Several West Bank mayors and notables yesterday publicly rejected the Camp David agreements and reaffirmed their support for the Palestine Liberation Organization. Their statement, the first by a group of West Bank leaders, also called for the return of East Jerusalem to Arab control and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.*

[redacted] Despite the hard line of the statement--the work of PLO sympathizers--the US Consulate in Jerusalem believes that some West Bank notables are giving consideration to the Camp David framework and hoping the Jordanians eventually become involved in negotiations that they could join. [redacted]



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